

2011 Green Festival Homeless and Underrepresented Youth Art Project

Last year, the City Council announced achieving carbon neutrality as one of its priorities. To be successful, we will need to reach members of the Seattle community who may not typically be engaged in the Council's work on climate change. We need the participation of every citizen, especially our youth.

This year, seven councilmembers on the Seattle City Council wrote a letter and partnered with local organizations to promote awareness about climate change through artistic expression at the Green Festival¹, on May 21. This unique opportunity was extended primarily to homeless youth and youth who are underrepresented in the green movement, with the goal of creating art, learning about sustainability and the environment, developing mentorship and creating career pathways.

On Saturday approximately 20 youth came from the Wing Luke's "Youth Can" program to paint on doors and discarded lumber² and talk about their perspectives on the environment and the barriers for them in participating in environmental endeavors. They worked with Carbon Coaches from the City of Seattle's Carbon Coach program³, volunteers in the community, and artists from the Nature Consortium.

Art on the Ridge⁴ will be hosting this piece of art at their gallery through the month of June. Throughout the summer, we will be sending artists and environmentalist volunteers to various youth organizations to talk about environmental justice and work with the youth to create artwork. The hope is then to place the art throughout the city and create awareness about the social justice barriers to achieving carbon neutrality, as well as the immense value of spreading messages through art for all kinds of communities in the city. Some of the groups we plan to visit include "Peace for the Streets by Kids on the Streets" (PSKS) through their "Step Beyond" program, Coyote Central, Neighborhood House's Youth program, among others.

The program will also pair mentors with the youth through a number of sources, to help guide their interests, market their art, and recommend career pathways in the arts.

The hope is to provide opportunities for youth to increase their environmental awareness, contribute to our community in a positive way, and learn how to showcase and sell their art. With this goal in mind, we are currently working to set up partnerships with local organizations—homeless youth organizations, arts organizations, and substance abuse organizations—to recruit youth, access space and materials for art projects, and identify potential mentors for the youth.

¹ Green Festival is a project of Green America and Global Exchange two leading nonprofit organizations dedicated to environmental and social justice for more than 27 years, and it inspires and promotes the connection between change and sustainable progress for people, communities and businesses. Green Festival's interactive marketplace and learning environment provides solutions to help make healthier lives—socially, economically and environmentally.

² Generously donated by the RE Store

³ <http://www.seattlecan.org/carboncoach.htm>

⁴ Art Gallery in Greenwood